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Volume 19 Number 2

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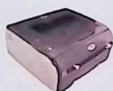
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Editorial



The Consumer Electronics Show in sometimes fabulous Las Vegas. Where New Year's resolutions are quickly forgotten and Christmas bonus cheques are cashed and summarily liquidated in the various flashing diversions.

Star Wars video slot machine, you are spawn of the Dark Side. With your promises of Death Star bonus spins and Darth Vader / Obi Wan Kenobi battles made all the more interesting as there's money riding on the outcome.

Every year, various denizens of the consumer tech world descend on Sin City to check out the latest and greatest innovations. Big business is conducted behind closed doors off the show floor and deals are discussed in the smaller halls where exhibitors are packed into veal fattening pens, reminiscent of the cubicles that some among us toil inside in order to make rent every month. While the booth design is not as elaborate as at some other tech-related shows, companies still drop hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars in their attempts to pique attendees' collective interest.

This year, the show expanded beyond its already

amazing 145,000 attendees for the 2005 show to over 150,000. The Las Vegas Convention Center is a 3.2 million sq ft facility and CES uses more than half of the available exhibiting space. While the show has traditionally spilled over into the halls of the adjacent Hilton hotel, this year is sprawled further with an entirely new portion of the show occupying the exhibition space at the Sands hotel ... alongside the Adult Entertainment Expo, which itself attracts 25,000 attendees.

If indeed a trade show is the best way to judge the overall health of the industries it represents, 2006 is a good year for tech ... and pretty good one for the adult industry too, I'm guessing.

While CES was a little anemic where exciting new product announcements are concerned, the Consumer Electronics Association, the member organization that puts the show together every year - announced that it expects the consumer tech sector to grow in the order of eight per cent in 2006 to \$135.4 billion wholesale.

Add that to the 11 per cent the organization says the industry swelled this year and it's a good time to be a tech head.

Enjoy the issue,
Andrew Moore-Crispin
Editor-in-Chief

Contents February 2006

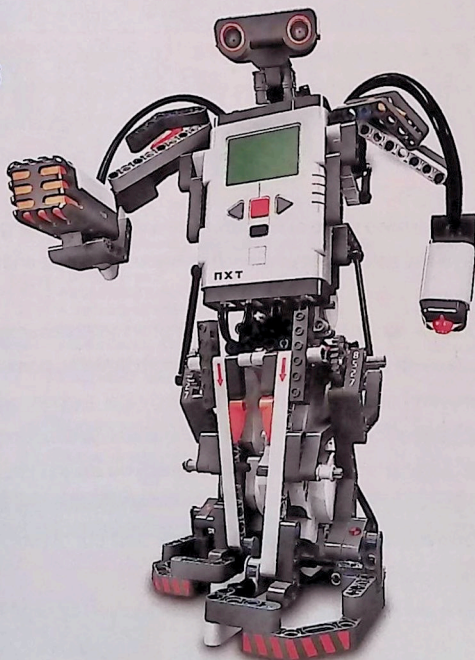
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Hot home tech at CES

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Organizing with Outlook

CES 2006: Portable audio goes video



HUB

DIGITAL LIVING

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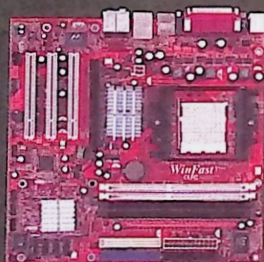
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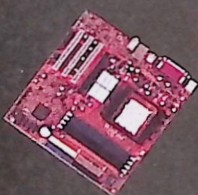
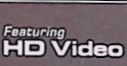
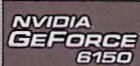


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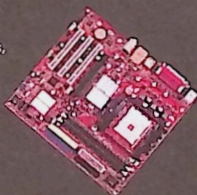
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Can your digicam do this?

CES packed with impressive point-and-shoot cameras and camcorders

Consumers looking for a reason to upgrade their digital camera or camcorder this year won't have a shortage of options. If what was unveiled at the 2006 Consumer Electronics Show is any indication, the latest still and video cameras offer higher resolution, better zoom and a host of other bells and whistles.

In 2006, the question won't be whether or not to upgrade, but rather which camera to choose? Here's a look at some of the more interesting point-and-shoot digital cameras and camcorders found on the show floor at CES.

Wide open possibilities

Two days before the show opened, Kodak announced it had developed the world's first dual-lens digital camera. That is, the Kodak EasyShare V570 combines an optical zoom lens (39 - 117 mm) and an ultra-wide angle lens (23 mm) into a sleek camera that's less than an inch thin. So, say you're at a party snapping shots of your friends and then someone yells out "Ok, everyone get in this one!"; now you press a button to switch to the wide-angle lens, which offers roughly 70 per cent more coverage area. The 5.0-megapixel camera features a total of 5x optical zoom and extras such as in-camera panorama stitching (180-degree photo in just three clicks)

and video at 30 frames per second. The Kodak EasyShare Photo Frame Dock 2 will also be bundled with the camera when it debuts in late February for \$499.

Atkins Shmatkins

If one of your New Year's resolutions was to shed a few pounds, you may be happy to know that a new HP digital camera can help you achieve the effect. The HP Photosmart R927 is not only the company's first 8.2-Megapixel digital camera but it has a number of photo effects built right in ranging from auto red-eye removal to fancy frames and borders to filters that can turn your photos into water-colour paintings, vintage photographs, cartoons or Picasso-inspired art. But one that raised the most eyebrows at CES among the more self-conscious attendees was the "trimming" feature; select this option from the back of the camera and you automatically shed a few pounds in the photo! Can you say "perfect for online dating?" Other camera features include a huge 3-inch LCD display, 3x optical zoom and a durable metallic body.

Video in a Flash

The award-winning Sanyo Xacti HD1 wowed CES attendees for a number of reasons: This slim and lightweight camcorder can shoot high-definition MPEG-4 video (720p; 16:9 widescreen aspect ratio) to a SecureDigital (SD) card, which yields roughly 41 minutes of HD video to a 2GB card. It also fares well as a still camera with 5.1-megapixel resolution. Also packed into this unit is a 10x optical zoom lens, continuous still shooting, digital image stabilizer, self-timer, voice recorder and flash with red-eye reduction. The 2.2-inch display uses OLEDs (organic light-emitting diodes) for a clear and bright picture, while a talking navigation feature will walk through first-time users. Due out in March for about US\$800 (no Canadian pricing has been confirmed), the HD1 will also include a docking station for PC or TV connection.

"Tubular" to the max

Ok, so it resembles a thermos more than anything else, but the Sony Handycam DCR-SR100 is the company's first hard drive-based camcorder (following last year's JVC and Panasonic models) and offers a few added extras not found in the competition. For one, the impressive 3-megapixel CCD camcorder (with 3-megapixel stills, too) includes a built-in shock-absorber and data buffering feature to protect image integrity if the camera is accidentally jolted. It can record in Dolby 5.1 surround sound, offers an optional Bluetooth mic for a center channel, and sports an attractive 2.7-inch TFT LCD screen.

This distinctively tubular 30GB hard drive unit – which translates to more than seven hours of high-quality video – should be available by the spring, though no price has been announced.

By Marc Saltzman



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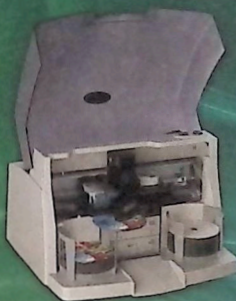


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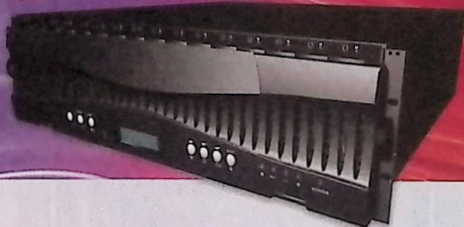


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Hot home tech at CES

One of the hottest categories of products at the Consumer Electronics Show this year was tech for the home. From enormous televisions and new personal video recorders (PVRs) to PCs with quad-graphics chips and fancy stereos designed for your iPod, you bet these high-tech manufacturers are feeding into our so-called "cocooning" lifestyle (bring it on!).

Here's a look at what made waves on the show floor:

Blu-Ray vs. HD-DVD

Not unlike the home video format wars in the early 80's between Betamax and VHS, two technologies are competing to replace your DVD player: Blu-Ray Disc and HD-DVD.

Both offer high-definition video content, multi-channel surround sound and handy extras such as the ability to pull up a movie menu on top of the flick you're watching, instead of taking you out of the film to tweak the settings.

While the same size as your 12 cm DVDs (which hold up to 8.5GB on dual-layer discs), Blu-Ray and HD-DVD discs can store up to 30GB or 50GB per side, respectively, and are therefore capable of delivering more than one thousand lines of resolution for your spanking new HDTV set. Both technologies are backward-compatible, therefore they'll still play your existing DVDs.

More of Hollywood's big studios are rallying behind Blu-Ray than HD-DVD, but the advantage of the latter is that they're cheaper and faster to manufacture. Example: the Pioneer Blu-Ray player (BDP-HD1) will cost roughly US\$1,800 when it comes out this spring (ouch), while the Toshiba HD-DVD player (HD-A1) will cost US\$499.

Pricing aside, I can tell you the Blu-Ray demo at CES blew away those who sat in, whether it was movie footage from Tarantino's *Kill Bill*, Vol. 1 (in true HD and 7.1 surround sound) or the high-def video game footage from EA Sports' *Fight Night Round 3* (Sony PlayStation 3 will be a Blu-Ray player).

Stay tuned to HUB for more on this heated battle for living room dominance.

TVs, TVs and more TVs

Pardon my French, but CES has become the proverbial pissing contest between some of the major TV manufacturers who believe size matters (ahem). In one corner there's Samsung with "the world's first 102-inch plasma TV" (which was at CES last year, too), then we've got LG's "world's largest" 102-

inch plasma television. Spitting distance away is Panasonic's 103-inch plasma TV, which can be accurately stated as "world's largest." But who cares? None of the three are actually in production, you'd have to take out a mortgage on your home to buy one and where would you put a television screen the size of a garage door? Sure, these monstrous screens drew crowds, which is what they wanted, but it would've been better to see something, well, groundbreaking. Like 3DTV. Or VRTV. Or Smell-o-vision. Whatever.

A number of TVs did impress, however, such as Sony's stunning KDS-R60XB1, a 60-inch rear-projection LCD with the company's new SXRD light engine, resulting in incredibly detailed 1080p high-definition images. Its 50-inch brother, the KDS-R50XB1, took home Sound & Vision magazine's Product of the Year and Best Video Product for 2005.

Another CES award-winner is the Samsung HL-S5679W, the world's first LED light sourced DLP rear-projection HDTV. This 56-inch television replaces the colour wheel and lamp-based image engine with a LED light sourced single chip that offers a host of advantages including a brighter picture, increased colour gamut reproduction, shorter turn-on time (seven seconds) and improved longevity. But few of the gawkers at the Samsung booth likely cared about the technical reasons for the sharper picture as they stared at the stunning video loop of nature footage. Due out in April for US\$4,199 (no Canadian pricing confirmed as of yet), this true high-definition set (1920 x 1080p) offers two 1080p HDMI inputs and an integrated ATSC and NTSC tuner.

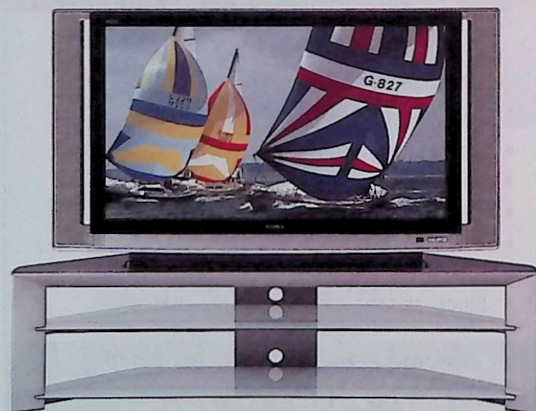
Other goodies

Logitech showed off its latest universal remote, the Harmony 890 [designed in Toronto]. In case you haven't seen these sleek remotes before, they connect to the Internet via your PC's USB port to import codes for your components; macro commands (such as Play a DVD) are also easily programmable. The new Harmony 890, though, is the first retail model in Logitech's award-winning family of remotes to use both radio frequency (RF) and infrared (IR) wireless signals to control not just your home theatre but also lighting and security systems using the Z-Wave wireless technology standard. No price or launch date has been announced.

Imagine being able to watch your favourite TV shows wherever you are in the world via any Windows XP-based or Macintosh computer. So even if you're in Italy at a wireless café, you can simply open up your laptop and watch your local television listings in, say, Vancouver. Introduced last year, the Slingbox [\$250 U.S.] is a small silver machine that "placeshifts" the TV signal from any cable box, satellite receiver or personal video recorder to your desktop or laptop PC. At CES, the company demonstrated the ability to watch TV on smartphones such as the Treo 700w.

The Denon AVR-2807 is a \$1500 audio-video receiver that can pass 1080p high-definition signals via HDMI cable, and can up-convert analog signals to 480p (a feature usually found in pricier receivers). The AVR-2807, which delivers 110 watts per channel (and offers 5.1 to 7.1 configurations), offers numerous input and output options, supports XM Satellite Radio, and will be compatible with Denon's iPod dock due out this April. Also of note is its unique room calibration technology (dubbed MultEQXT); it provides an audio "sweet spot" for multiple listeners regardless of the speaker layout. The unit will ship in either black or silver.

By Marc Saltzman



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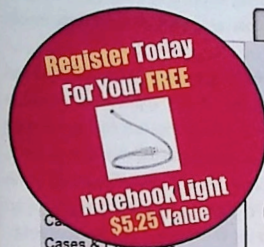
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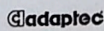
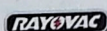
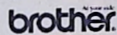
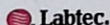
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Searching for the perfect search

Most of us have built up such large collections of documents, emails, pictures, and other files that simply finding the one we happen to be looking for can be a serious pain in the caboose.

In the past we were stuck with the agonizingly slow and inaccurate search functionality provided by Windows. But in recent years a host of free, powerful search utilities has sprung up that allow us to index virtually every file on our systems and then find them in seconds by conducting simple and intuitive queries.

The ostensible trifecta of these utilities is Google Desktop 2, Yahoo! Desktop Search, and MSN Search Toolbar with Windows Desktop Search. These tools perform many of the same basic functions, but each provides subtle differences in their search capabilities and graphical user interfaces that may or may not appeal to your particular needs or taste.

MSN Search Toolbar with Windows Desktop Search Available for download at: <http://toolbar.msn.com>

Microsoft is apparently toiling away to deliver a robust desktop search tool for its next generation of Windows, but in the interim they have provided us with MSN Search Toolbar with Windows Desktop Search.

The most obvious advantage of Microsoft's search tool is that it has been seamlessly integrated within several other popular Microsoft products, adding instantaneous querying functionality to Windows Explorer, Internet Explorer, and the desktop taskbar, as well as Outlook and Outlook Express. More advanced searches can be initiated through an application interface that allows users to search by file type and includes a viewing pane to preview search results.

Windows Desktop Search provides support for a broad spectrum of files. By installing add-ons, users can search more than 200 file types, including Eudora, Mozilla, and Thunderbird email documents.

Another differentiator is speed. The application uses an indexing system that involves the creation of a large group of smaller indexes for each document type. Microsoft says this multi-index system results in much faster search results.

Notable drawbacks are minor; it's incompatible with non-Windows operating systems and has the potential to gum up the works on older machines with minimal RAM. Both of these shortcomings are common to many desktop search utilities.

Yahoo! Desktop Search

Available for download at: <http://desktop.yahoo.com>

Like its competitors, Yahoo! Desktop Search creates an index of your files

that is regularly updated whenever the application is running. However, the detail and quantity of data indexed for each file is superior to that of many other utilities and includes such handy information as MP3 metadata, text in PDFs, and even the contents of email attachments and documents inside ZIP files.

Once created, the index provides almost instantaneous access to all catalogued files through the Yahoo! Desktop Search application, which is broken into two panes: one for searching, and another for previewing found files. You can search by file type, such as email, MS Word document, and image, or search the entire index at once. Results are refined with each letter typed, and the currently selected file within your search is displayed in the preview pane, saving you from opening the file to check its contents.

Yahoo! Desktop Search also boasts a media player for previewing media files and adds a toolbar within Outlook to facilitate more efficient searches within your email.

Downsides include a lack of support for email applications other than Outlook and a failure to effectively integrate with Yahoo!'s online search functionality to show both local and Web-based results on the same page.

Google Desktop 2

Available for download at: <http://desktop.google.com>

Google Desktop 2 uses an interface you are probably already quite familiar with: the Google search engine running in a Web browser. You can choose to search locally, over the Web, or both — in which case the results returned are identified as either residing on your machine or on a Web page.

Unfortunately, the search functionality doesn't provide a viewing pane for previewing selected files, and you can't conduct searches by file category.

However, Google Desktop 2 offers something its competition doesn't: an optional desktop sidebar that provides quick access to a variety of frequently used local and Web-based resources.

Composed of a panel of boxes on the right side of the desktop, the sidebar delivers personalized information such as news stories, RSS feeds, weather, and local maps as well as links to recently viewed mail, pictures, and Web pages. Below is a Google search box that will scan your PC's local index, narrowing the list of returned results with each letter you type in.

Google's sidebar is an attempt to anticipate what the user plans to look for, thus eliminating the need to conduct searches. How successful it is in its delivery will depend on the needs of individual users.

By Chad Sapieha

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Organizing with Outlook

Most of us can use a little bit of help organising our lives whether it be keeping track of appointments, making reminder notes or cleaning up an overly full email inbox. If you think of Outlook as simply an email program, you're missing out on harnessing much of its power. In fact, Outlook has all the tools you need to organize your business and personal life. Let's look at some of the tools that you can put to work right away.

Sorting the mail

Outlook's Rules feature helps you tame an unruly inbox. You can write rules to divert email to different folders according to what email address they were sent to, who sent them, or some other criteria that makes sense to you. To make a rule, click the Mail option and choose Tools, Rules and Alerts, E-mail Rules. Click New Rule, select "Start from a blank rule" and click "Check messages when they arrive". Click Next and check an option that identifies the emails you want to divert. If an underlined link appears in the Step 2 window, click it to configure that option. For example, choose "Through the specified account" and then set the email account for the emails to divert. Continue through the Wizard to determine what to do with the emails (place in a different folder) and define any exclusions to the rule. Finally, give the rule a name, turn it on and, if desired, run it on your inbox to start the clean up.

When an email requires follow up, flag it so you don't forget to do this. Right click the e-mail and choose Follow Up and then, if you're using Outlook 2003, choose Add Reminder. Choose an action such as Follow Up, Forward or Reply from the Flag to list and, from the "Due by" list choose the date to do this. Outlook flags the item and ensures you're reminded that it requires attention.

Managing digital notes

While paper sticky notes are handy, digital sticky notes are better still. To create one, click the Notes option, click New and type your note, ensuring that the first line is descriptive of its contents for easy reference. You

can use Notes to store reminders, to jot down a phone number or anything that's important to you. To stick the note to your desktop, close the note and drag it onto your desktop or onto your Quick Launch bar. You can open and

view the Note even when Outlook is closed. You can also email a Note by right clicking it, click Forward and complete the email before sending it.

Organize your calendar

Outlook's Calendar is a great tool for managing your schedule. You can create recurring appointments that happen on a regular basis such as a regular Friday meeting. To do this, open the Calendar and choose New. Configure the appointment description and time and click Recurrence to identify its frequency. In future, if a meeting changes from Friday to Thursday because of a holiday, for example, you can adjust the one occurrence without disturbing the remainder.

You can also see dates of your choice in the Calendar view if you click 1-Day view then Control + click on various dates in the mini calendars. The dates display side by side letting you compare, say, Monday and Thursday next week or the next four Fridays.

Track your work

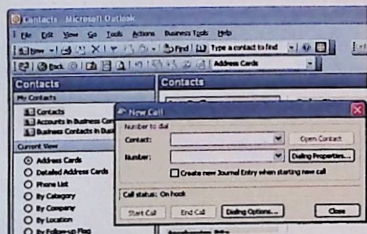
Outlook Journal is an often overlooked tool. The Journal can record every Office document you work on including the filename, where it is stored and the time you spent working on it. Use this information to find files or track your work. You must enable this feature to use it so choose Tools, Options, Preferences, Journal Options and tick the checkboxes for all the Office programs you use. Now the Journal will record and list all the work you've done and you can click a file listed there to open it automatically in the program you created it in.

Hands-free dialling

Finally, if you have your computer attached to the telephone line and the phone linked to the computer, Outlook will dial the phone for you. Choose the Contacts category then choose Actions, Call Contact and call a contact or choose New Call, type the number to call and click Start Call. You'll be prompted when to pick up the phone to talk. To track and time the calls you make, click the Create New Journal Entry when starting new call checkbox before you dial.

By Helen Bradley

Helen Bradley specializes in writing hands-on tutorials. Her columns appear regularly in a number of publications in Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA. Contact Helen at helen@helenbradley.com.





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CES 2006: Portable audio goes video

Amid a sea of iPod accessories – speaker docks, charging cradles, DJs, belt buckles among them – it gets difficult to spot any true innovations among the sea of knock-offs and “me too” products.

Thin was in at CES 2006 as companies scale down their existing players to compete with Apple's ubiquitous iPod line. Video capabilities and flash storage are the orders of the day.

Hardware is only a part of the digital audio player (DAP) and personal video player (PVP) story, however. The overriding message at this year's CES is that hardware is only as good as the services available to support it.

Google Video

Video.google.com

Google co-founder Larry Page used his CES keynote address to unveil many of the initiatives the company has been working on. Topping off the list is

Google Video, a pay-per-download video service with a large free section, populated by the user community.

Though current offerings are somewhat paltry – Shows from ABC, NBC and CBS including Survivor, The Amazing Race and CSI sell for US\$1.95 per episode – there are a great many more obscure movies, videos and TV show episodes available for download. The NBA is offering day-after game downloads for US\$3.95.

Digital Rights Management (DRM) is up to the releasing studio to decide. Google's Video Player is the only thing capable of playing some of the videos – CBS shows for example – while some others can be downloaded for playback on an iPod or PlayStation Portable.



A wealth of free one-off videos are interesting and generally free to download.

Creative Zen Vision:M

www.creative.com/zenvisionm

Creative's latest DAP bridges the gap between its well-received Zen players and the more niche Zen Vision PVP.

The CNET Best of CES 2006 award-winning player offers up a bright 2.5-inch TFT screen, and 30GB hard drive for storing up to 15,000 songs or 120 hours of video.

Though noticeably thicker (at 74 x 124 x 20 mm) than the fifth-generation video-capable iPod with similar storage, the Vision:M offers up extended battery life: four hours for video playback and upwards of 14 hours for audio with moderate LCD usage. The player supports MP3, WMA with digital rights management and WAV audio up to 320kbps along with various video formats including MPEG-4, WMV, Motion JPEG, DivX and XviD.

The Zen Vision:M will be available in Canada in February \$429.99, Creative says.

Sansa e200 and c100

www.sandisk.com

Sandisk has made some inroads in the flash DAP market already with its inexpensive and widely available Sansa line. At CES, the company unveiled the latest additions to its line, the Sansa e200 and c100.

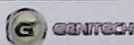
The e200 series comes in three flavours, the e250, e260 and e270 with 2GB (32 hours, 128Kbps MP3), 4GB (64 hours, 128Kbps MP3) and 6GB (128 hours, 128Kbps MP3) of flash storage and suggested retail prices of US\$199.99, US\$249.99 and US\$299.99 respectively.

These iPod nano competitors are larger than Apple's diminutive player at 44 x 89 x 13 mm and feature a 1.8-inch TFT screen, video and photo viewing capabilities and a scratch-resistant titanium alloy casing.

Along with the included storage, the “e” series players all support the MicroSD standard for further expansion up to 1GB.

The c100 series is Sandisk's new flagship player with a 1.21-inch colour screen for viewing thumbnail images and album art. With storage capacities of 1GB (16 hours, 128Kbps MP3) and 2GB (32 hours, 128Kbps MP3) for the c140 and 150 respectively, the players incorporate a 20-channel FM tuner with record capabilities and carry suggested retail prices of US\$119.99 and US\$169.99. [Canadian pricing and availability yet to be determined.]

By Andrew Moore-Crispin



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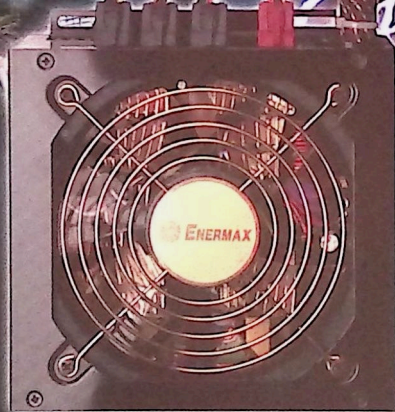
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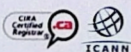
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